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EULOGY

OF

GEN. ZACHARY TAYLOR,

LATE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,

DELIVERED BY THE APPOINTMENT OF THE

CITY AUTHORITIES AND CITIZENS, CONJOINTLY,

OF THE

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE,

AUGUST 13, 1850.

BY LUTHER V. BELL.

CAMBRIDGE:

PRINTED AT THE CHRONICLE OFFICE.

1850.

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TO THE HONORABLE LUTHER V. BELL,

Sir,—At a meeting of the City Council last evening, an order was passed, by a concurrent vote of the two boards, as follows :

“*Ordered*, That the Mayor and President of the Common Council be a Committee to express the thanks of the City Council to the Honorable Luther V. Bell, for the very appropriate and eloquent Eulogy delivered by him this day, on the Life, Character, and Services of Zachary Taylor, late President of the United States, and to request of him a copy for the press.”

It gives us sincere pleasure to execute the commission assigned to us by the City Council : and we cannot forbear to express our earnest desire, that you will comply with the request of the Council, by furnishing a copy for publication.

Respectfully,

Your obedient servants,

SIDNEY WILLARD, }
S. P. HEYWOOD, } *Committee.*

Cambridge, Aug. 14 1850.

Somerville, Aug. 14, 1850.

Gentlemen,—In accordance with the very complimentary request of the City Council of Cambridge communicated through you, I have the honor to submit the manuscript of the Eulogy of our late venerated President.

The very brief space allowed for its preparation is so well known to the City Council, as to render superfluous any claiming of their indulgence. The citizens of Cambridge, I am sure, will make every allowance for a performance undertaken at so short notice from a desire to meet their wishes.

With thanks to you personally for the kind manner of your communication,

I am, very truly yours,

LUTHER V. BELL.

HIS HONOR SIDNEY WILLARD,

S. P. HEYWOOD, ESQ., *Committee.*

EULOGY.

THOSE accustomed to mark the weight of great events upon the public mind, would probably concur in opinion, that no removal by death of any distinguished citizen, since the departure of the Father of his Country, has occasioned a sentiment of such universal and profound sensibility,—has struck so deep a blow upon the national heart,—as the decease of our late revered Chief Magistrate. When it is recollected that four short years ago, General Taylor was almost an unknown man to his countrymen at large,—was only unostentatiously and unambitiously fulfilling his duties as an officer of our army, and enjoying the high esteem of his friends and the entire confidence of his government, we may well feel struck with the deep, earnest, heartfelt grief which his sudden, and for all but himself, premature end has called forth throughout the whole land,—from one of the great oceans to the other. Nor is the profound sensibility at our loss confined to his native land. The deep responses just echoing back to us across the waste of waters, renew and rekindle our sorrow, for we feel

that another hemisphere and the distant isles of the ocean condole with us, that a friend to justice, peace and humanity is no more!

When we also consider that he was called to that highest post of human greatness by the triumphs of a party, a majority, but still only a part of his fellow-citizens, and that too under no ordinary circumstances of party enthusiasm and excitement, we cannot but feel, whether among his early supporters or not, a melancholy pleasure, a generous satisfaction, as American freemen, that around his bier all have united in fraternal sympathy, and the tears of all sections into which an honest zeal for our country's welfare has thrown us, have been commingled over the remains of one whom this united heart, this accordant voice of his countrymen, pronounce to have been a great and good man! Such unanimity of sorrow is honorable alike to the dead and the living. It is an omen auspicious to the fates of the republic!

It is a glorious thought, for it tells of reconciliation, of forgiveness and brotherhood—a consolation full of hope to the patriot, that however dark and portentous may seem the clouds of disunion, which at times may lower over our country, that chasm cannot be hopelessly wide, that wall of partition cannot be insurmountably high, which allows north and south and every other division among us, to come freely together to bury and to mourn a common chief, father and friend.

I speak not of merely outward ceremonies of lamentation and respect. That every external tribute which

custom and association have consecrated as fitting and expressive tokens of a nation's sorrow, should be paid,—the unanimous and affecting eulogies and honors within the national Legislature,—the sepulture by a nation's hand,—the solemn rites in every city,—the funeral knell,—the booming minute-gun,—the drooping flags,—the moaning dirge,—and “all the pomp and circumstance” with which a great nation is wont to speak its gratitude and its grief,—is so natural, so in conformity with usage and propriety, when the President of a republic, a people's choice is removed, that their omission would indeed be an awful mark of a people's indifference — a nation's disapproval. But for him, whose obsequies we are met to celebrate, this is no empty observance of decorous forms,—no barren show of heartless mourning. He that looks the least below the surface of a nation's feelings, will not have one doubt that it

“——hath that within, which passeth show,
These but the trappings and the suits of woe.”

A man “who has filled the measure of his country's glory,”—whose recent and short elevation, gratifying as it was to a majority of his fellow-citizens, bore even to them an exultation small in proportion to the regrets of all in his downfall before the common enemy, could not but have characteristics of head and heart, in his life, his feelings and his judgments, which it is a privilege and a duty for his mourning fellow-citizens to analyze and unfold. It is of the rewards and excellencies of distinguished virtue and greatness, that their

possessor is renewed in coming generations, in that his traits of merit are available for their imitation and encouragement.

That honorable duty, with which, as an early admirer of what was already developed of the character of our late President, I am proud to be entrusted, diffidently undertaken and with hasty preparation, at the request of the authorities and citizens conjointly of this city, renowned in the annals of American literature, and extending itself over the classic ground of the American revolution, it shall be mine to attempt.

The work must be done in sober sadness,—in plain and simple words,—for such I deem fitting, and in harmony with my subject. Even had my life been trained in Academic groves and literary seclusion to exalt the warrior's fame in strains of eloquence and poetry, I would not seek to throw around that unsophisticated, modest, unadorned old man the ephemeral incense of high-flown adulation, or wreath his brows with garlands of exalted praise. He never felt one aspiration to be a hero of the world's worship. The gaudy and blood-stained laurels, from which he turned, sickened and disgusted, when living, shall be scattered by no hand of mine over his grave when dead! My spirit revolts from the wish to glorify him with extravagant eulogiums. I would fain speak of him as he was, and in the events of his long, but not overcrowded life, would seek to know how he acquired that never-ebbing confidence, respect and affection which we, the people, bore to him. The monument by which in common

with a thousand coadjutors on this affecting occasion, I would aid to perpetuate our gratitude and his noble example, should be no Corinthian column of exquisite proportions, chiseled in florid and elaborate decorations. Rather in harmony with the eternal fitness of things, should it be the solid, unornamented, simple obelisk of eternal granite, whose summit should defy the tempest, and whose sides should only be made more resplendent in whiteness, as the storms of time should beat against it.

The outline of the biographer's sketch, which shall bring to mind the main events in the life of our illustrious subject, will make but a paragraph,—a brief paragraph. For he was a man ever ready "to bide his time," to appear when the drama required his presence on the scene, but totally unacquainted with any sensation of restlessness or of ambition, which could lead him to thrust himself uncalled before the world. Zachary Taylor was born of most respectable parentage,—his father an officer of the Revolution, and often an Elector of Presidents,—in Orange Co. in Virginia, in 1784. Transferred by emigration, when a child, to what was then known as the "Dark and Bloody Ground" of Kentucky, his youthful training had two elements beyond the parental influence, to which it is not perhaps extravagant to say, that the best and prominent features of his intellectual and moral organization are naturally ascribable. The training of a frontier settlement, surrounded by savages, developed the traits of sagacity, valor, self possession, perseverance, which

marked him as a *warrior*. The training of a New England schoolmaster, we would fain believe, was not unfelt in the early communication of that learning and literary taste which were preeminent, and that truth, integrity, purity and modesty, which distinguished him as a *man*. In 1808, he was appointed, Mr. Jefferson being President, to his first commission, a lieutenancy, in the army of the United States. He rose to the rank of Captain in 1812, and after the declaration of war against Great Britain, he was breveted by President Madison for his memorable and gallant defence of Fort Harrison, with a handful of men against a large body of savages. In 1832, then advanced to the rank of Colonel, he distinguished himself in the Black Hawk war;—was ordered into Florida in 1836, and for his signal services against the savage Seminoles, was created a brevet brigadier general, and commander-in-chief in Florida. Subsequently he was transferred to the command of the division of the army in the south western portion of the Union;—was ordered into Texas in 1845; advanced to the banks of the Rio Grande, and afterwards, beginning with the battles of the 8th and 9th of May, 1846, at Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma, Monterey, and last and most glorious of all Buena Vista, he overthrew, and with the most fearful odds against him, signally defeated the most skillful of the Mexican Generals, Ampudia, Arista, Paredes, and even the President of the Mexican Republic himself, the General Santa Anna. Finally, while still engaged in service on a distant frontier, brought before his fellow-citizens by his conduct in this war, and still

more by his correspondence with the government in relation to his command, his name was hailed by an impulse of enthusiasm so wide spread and universal, as to seem almost a preternatural movement of the minds of his fellow-citizens, and he was elected to the Presidency of the United States under circumstances so remarkable, so honorable to him as the receiver, and his country as the giver, as to well deserve to be embalmed in the noble tribute paid to him by the American Demosthenes, in the Senate : “ I suppose, Sir,” said Mr. Webster, “ that no case ever happened in the very best days of the Roman Republic, when any man found himself clothed in the highest authority in the state, under circumstances more repelling all suspicion of personal application, all suspicion of pursuing any crooked path in politics, or all suspicion of having been actuated by sinister views and purposes, than in the case of the worthy and eminent and distinguished and good man, whose death we now deplore. He has left a legacy to the people of his country in this ; he has left them a bright example, which addresses itself with peculiar force to the young and rising generation, for it tells them that there is a path to the highest degree of renown,—straight, onward, steady, without change or deviation.”

Such is an index to the events of a life by no means short, of a man who was the spontaneous, unbiassed, free choice of a Republic of twenty millions of people as their Chief Magistrate, to fill the seat of Washington.

How will an elevated, unprejudiced posterity, how will a severe history deal with this great decision of

the American people? Is the elevation of a man who certainly was a military chieftain, untrained in the schools and contests of statesmanship, of one who had been scarce a twelvemonth in the public eye, to be judged in the impartial future as a wise, discreet and safe exercise of a great right and a greater responsibility, or is it to be dealt with as an example of popular instability, led away by novelty and caprice, and dazzled with the splendor of military achievement? Has the event, happy and honorable as all now admit it to be, of Gen. Taylor's elevation to the Presidency been a folly of the popular will, a madness of universal suffrage providentially overruled, and not to be rehazarded; or has it been the highest proof which a people could give of innate sagacity, of wide spread information, of wise and well directed freedom of choice? Were the great traits of soul educed in the early Mexican campaign such as should be convincing — a proof *ex pede Herculem*, — that their possessor would be equal to every emergency of the State? To solve these enquires, — to anticipate the judgment of future times upon the Chief and the people who made him such, will be the best memorial to his glory and their honor; for the character of the hero and his admirers will be coincident and mutually reflective.

Fortunately the character of President Taylor is an easy study, for if ever there were a human heart clear, transparent, free from disguise, knowing and needing no concealment, it was his.

Let us briefly run over the elements of his intellectu-

al and moral identity, as displayed in his capacity as a military leader, in the merits of his acts and judgments as a statesman during the limited, but adequately displaying period of his holding the reins of government, and lastly in his traits as a private citizen.

His military life and character is that which naturally attracts our attention. All his years except the last one were passed as a soldier. It was unquestionably the accident of his position as a soldier — sagacious, successful, brave and humane, to which the country was indebted for its privilege of calling him to its first, highest, most difficult trust. Yet to infer that mere military renown might have captivated and carried away the American people, irrespective of other great qualifications, is neither in accordance with experience, nor just to the intelligence and patriotism of our masses. Gen. Taylor is by no means the first great captain, “without fear and without reproach,” who has been urged by dazzled friends upon the people for its highest civil office. *Vivere fortes ante Agamemnona* — brave men are no such rarity in the republican annals, that even if enjoying the highest personal reputation they may aspire to the civic crown. We, at the north at least, have been habitually on our guard against this, the most common of the dangers on which republics have been shattered and lost. It seems rather that in the judgment of intelligent freemen, and preeminently while the nation is at peace, or only engaged in a war from which but one result can be anticipated, military achievements are rather an obstacle than a recommendation; — that

it was rather in spite of renown in arms than because of it, that the late President was preferred. If mere victories were to be passports to the great civil stations in the republic, there would be in our military and naval service more than one, who might exclaim with truth, that republics were indeed ungrateful. It must be clear to every mind which looks at the subject in all its bearings, that the mere triumphs of the "army of observation" would never have given its General any higher place in the honors of his country, than has been so justly awarded to the other great General of the Mexican war. The character of Gen. Taylor was neither formed nor established in that last call of military service. He was at that time already past the meridian of life, with mind, morals, habits all fixed and matured. That his surpassing merits should have been so little known or appreciated is not the least of them. His retiring, unobtrusive modesty — his steady, strict devotion to duty in the far distant and savage fields for which he was selected, removed him from any chance of being early regarded as he was. Nor is this a rare or wonderful circumstance; thousands of the best and highest order of minds for their country's service are thus concealed and unsuspected. A great opportunity brings them forward and the world is instinctively sagacious in detecting their worth. It was the fires of the battle fields of Palo Alto and Buena Vista that cast the glare of their illumination upon the sublime lineaments of his moral form, and one glance of his watching country caught enough of its greatness to satisfy it that

it was no counterfeit presentiment of worth. The flashes of the blazing artillery at Monterey revealed in the august proportions of that calm, composed, thoughtful and merciful old man, a similitude so strong to the great pattern hero of mankind, that the public heart instinctively, spontaneously, felt that this was indeed *the man* raised up by Providence to meet his country's need! Never before was conviction so rapid, so certain, so irresistible, so irreversible.

I am not of those who join in that modern reform which would aid in diminishing the war spirit by undervaluing and denouncing military excellence and renown. So long as war exists among the nations, the more refined, conscientious, just and strong are those devoted to the profession of arms, the less will be its horrors.

High consideration for deeds of battle ever has been, ever will be a deep sentiment of our race, common to the most savage and the most cultivated of the nations. Its basis is gratitude. A leader of men in times of great peril is looked upon as an earthly savior. The gratitude poured forth while danger is immediate, while his services are indispensable, it is honorable to human nature, is not forgotten as soon as the trial is over. The obligation originally due and the honors and rewards originally accorded, to the individual earning them are transferred to the profession of arms itself. We are willing to bestow in advance our thanks and benefits upon those who we know and feel are ready and prepared to serve and protect us, when the hour of need shall come. We are grateful that there is a class of

men—of educated, refined, virtuous men,—who are content, especially in “the dull piping times of peace,” to abandon the avenues of common life, of business, distinction, wealth and influence, and maintain the peculiar rules, practices, habits and spirit, which the experience of ages has demonstrated to be essential to protection and even to peace. Modern reformers, in their visionary dreams of millennial harmony among the nations, while the individual heart is unchanged, forget, while denouncing the spirit of battle, that soldiers in modern times have nothing to do with originating or extending war. That is a function left to the wisdom or the folly of a far different class—the civilian and the statesman, moved into activity or abandoned into insignificance by the holder of the ballot behind. Were there not one trained soldier or leader in the world, the calamities of war or its liability to come could not be in the least degree changed. In our land the essential difference would be, that war instead of being carried on under the prompt, effective and merciful lead of our Taylors, Scotts, and Wools, where it loses half its duration and half its horrors, would go back to the rash, predatory and merciless hands of mere fighters and sanguinary partisans, whose sole traits of fitness and competency, and in these they could no more than equal the polished and refined soldier, would be recklessness of personal danger, sagacity in adapting means to ends, and that mysterious power, granted to but few, of inspiring all whom they touch with their influence and spirit.

The high value with which mankind appreciates true military greatness, has naturally made a counterfeit of it current through the world. The two forms, the genuine and the spurious, are as widely different as any two existences can be, having the same generic appellation and a few traits only in common.

The one phase is indicated by the possession of what is so emphatically termed the *war-spirit*, which loves war for its own sake. Its disciple craves the order to rush into the thickest of the fight, to face the cannon's mouth, to lead the forlorn hope, to plant the standard "in the imminent deadly breach" over piles, no matter how deep, of human corpses, and all for the sake of glory or of the rewards and recognitions of glory in promotion, titles, honors and eclat. The other and true grade of military greatness has in it no element of the war-spirit, — the love of battle for any of its excitements or results whether more or less respectable. It is that calm, considerate exercise of moral courage, of physical bravery and intelligent adaptation of means to bring about a successful result, which leads a man to peril his own life and assume the awful responsibility for the hazards of thousands of other lives, because duty and the obligations of his conscience compel him thus to act. He regards the hour of battle as no reckless gala day, into which he is to rush with the same wild excitement as that which animates the barb upon which he is seated. The true soldier is not blinded to the awful duties which have devolved upon him. He contests them as man, while he also feels them as a man, and acts with an energy,

self-poise and calm enthusiasm which a true man must feel in the certainty that mighty consequences are suspended on his every judgment. The world has long since agreed upon one, the highest impersonation of true military greatness. The illustrious warrior whose obsequies we celebrate, follows in the footsteps of him, whose character seems to have been the model of his life.

Although Gen. Taylor's whole life was devoted actively, successfully, and earnestly, to the profession of arms, never were man's views more just than his, both in respect to war in the abstract and in its relations to a country like ours. No man less felt the war-spirit in himself—less cultivated it in others. Victory, instead of stimulating him, made him only the more anxious for peaceful accommodation. Even when his success was so unparalleled that a mere warrior would have pushed on to new conquests or looked onward to "the Halls of the Montezumas," we find him ready to do and do well, just what a paramount sense of obedience to the constitutional authorities of his country required, and no more. In his own language, "*The object nearest my heart had been to bring the war to a speedy termination—to restore peace and amity between two neighboring republics, which had every motive to cultivate good will. My life has been devoted to arms, yet I look upon war at all times and under all circumstances as a national calamity, to be avoided if compatible with national honor. The principles of our government, as well as its true policy, are opposed to the subjugation of other nations, and the dismemberment of other countries by conquest.*"

It is evident that Gen. Taylor looked upon war just

as any other intelligent, conscientious, unwarped man views it, without one professional bias. He either never felt or had entirely lived down in his own soul all the romance and poetry of his vocation. One of the band of volunteers not undistinguished in the political world, who followed his standard to the Rio Grande, in a recent tribute to his memory, observes respecting the military plans of his chief, that although in some instances they were attributed to others, they were really and emphatically his own. "Yet," continues Capt. Naylor, "so modest a man was he — so diffident in his own abilities, that when his object was once attained, and victory had perched upon our banners, *he never had any contests with others about the laurels!*" Rather was it that he saw no imaginary laurels to be the subject of contention. We never see him acting, we never see him invoking others to act, under any false glosses of the nature of war. Its exercise was evidently a sad duty to him, and one whose repulsiveness he never deigned to conceal under imposing words and grandiloquent phrases. It evidently was never associated in his mind with the idea of triumphs, ovations, and rewards. You never find him uttering a sentence for effect. The wonderful moral influence he held over his troops seems to be derived solely from his bearing before them and their knowledge of his character. He made no harrangues to stimulate his army or to reflect his own participation in its triumphs. You hear from him no pointed catchwords, nor blood-stirring mottos to be embalmed in after times in song and story; no rhetorical flourishes to be emblazoned on

triumphal arches, or to call forth enraptured plaudits of pit and boxes, when drawn into melodramatic uses. He never breathes an aspiration for “a glorious victory or a monument in Westminster Abbey.” He never tells his soldiers “to watch his white plume and follow where it leads into the thickest of the fight;” he never tells them, “Soldiers, forty centuries look down upon you from the pyramids!”

The bombastic reply was put into Gen. Taylor’s mouth, when summoned by Santa Anna to yield before his superior force, “Tell General Santa Anna that General Taylor never surrenders!” — words better adapted for the hero of some naval or military drama, than for a wise and discreet soldier, who knew that his adversary had brought quadruple his force to the field. A friend who had been an inmate of Gen. Taylor’s military family, indignantly spurned the idea that so uncharacteristic a response could have come from the good old General. In due time the actual correspondence came. General Taylor simply and briefly had stated, that he “*begged to decline acceding to his request.*”

Indeed it is certain that he never anticipated war as a something pardonable, if not desirable, to one whose work was arms; he never looked at its actual existence as other than what it is — a scene of horrors; never as the field of brilliant feats, of glorious achievements, to be followed with rewards and honors. His peculiar transparent character allows us to enter into his very soul, and watch his unsophisticated, pure and elevated conceptions of duty. When it was proposed to place

him at the head of the army of observation, he hesitated. He was too sagacious not to see into the future so far, as to know that upon the man who held that post must devolve the duty of making an initiation of a war. He had been, as a citizen, an open, avowed opponent of the annexation of Texas. He felt that a contest based on that act was deficient in at least one of the elements which could justify it to the world. He was strongly tempted to resign. His sound judgment instantly suggested to him that such a step certainly would not change what was intended, nor probably postpone it one hour. On the other hand, it would not improbably throw the conduct of the war into hands which would regard blood and carnage and conquest and military glory, in a very different light from what he did. He also felt that the duty of a soldier was obedience, and the moment individuals or coteries of officers should begin to form themselves into little cabinets to canvass and overrule the question, whether their superiors, acting under as high responsibilities as themselves, were acting wisely, there would be an end to the very name of an army and the country certainly left open to dishonor and invasion. To resign, would have been to throw the command at this most trying time and delicate position into less experienced hands; would be a poor return for a country which had so long sustained a trained army to meet exigencies which its legitimate authorities had decided to have arrived.* A friend

* Fortunately within the last few days, circumstances have brought forward his exact views and mental operations in looking at this decision. It is a minute of a

might also have suggested to him, what no doubt to his modest self-appreciation would never have occurred, that if a vigorous, active war is ever the most humane or least cruel to both assailants and assailed, in his hands would the duty be best and soonest done. The result renders it most highly probable that in any other hands four battles in prompt succession would not have "conquered a peace" for the valley of the Rio Grande. I would not discuss that difficult question, how far a soldier is bound to implicit obedience. No one can doubt who examines the fact, that General Taylor was placed precisely in a position where a just, conscientious and strong-minded man was obliged to decide upon this point, and that he did decide it according to the best judgment he possessed.

It was emphatically duty and not glory, which actuated him when the hour of battle arrived, as well as in the considerations prior to engaging in the war. His behavior before, during and after his battles, appears to me to have a marked resemblance to the deportment of one of

conversation with him which probably, except for his death, would have left this point, so interesting a one in his history, to be decided only by inference. Speaking of his proposed resignation, he said, "Upon second thoughts, I remembered that for nearly forty years I had eaten the bread of the country, and I felt something rise within me, forbidding me to abandon that country and desert her service at the moment that she called me to a difficult, responsible, disagreeable, and dangerous duty. Further than this, I was opposed to the impending war, I was opposed to the acquisition of territory from Mexico, I was a friend and a lover of peace, and it occurred to me that if the management of the war were in my hands, I might have opportunity, from time to time, to mitigate its severities, to shorten its duration, and facilitate the return of peace, and that the evils threatening the country, from a war with Mexico, might be multiplied and aggravated if, in consequence of my giving way, an officer of totally different views, on these subjects, should succeed to the command. Considerations like these determined my course, and I abandoned my proposed resignation."

our great surgeons when compelled by the convictions of duty and necessity not to be resisted, to engage in the bloody, difficult, and terrible operations of his art. Careful and considerate in every preparation, anticipating and prepared for all possible contingencies, keenly alive to the high responsibilities of his position, the idea of himself — of how success or failure is to operate upon individual hopes, interests or reputation, appears to have receded so far into the background as to be lost in the distance. The critical moment arrived, he is cool, self-possessed, quickened in intellectual resources. Energetic, decisive and confident of power. no false tenderness, no mistaken or mistimed shrinking, no false pity spares one necessary stroke; — the dreadful duty done, he is gentle, tender, sympathizing and merciful.

When he felt it his duty to fight, he seems to have also felt that internal assurance common to great power, that he was to succeed. How clear it is that under adverse circumstances his mental energies would have fully sustained him. When about to engage in the battle of Buena Vista, with an overwhelming superiority of force opposed to him, he comprehended fully the danger which invested him, but he had made up his mind that it was his duty to stand there, and in his own simple language written before the engagement, he "*looked to Providence for a good result!*"

On that memorable occasion at the beginning of the war, when it was necessary for him to reach Point Isabel at any hazards, for those supplies without which an army cannot exist, he left the little garrison at Fort Brown,

under circumstances of suspense and peril which have scarce a parallel. He simply said, "*I shall be back,*" on a certain day. The manner in which that brave force and its chivalric commander performed their duty, is the best tribute to their full and implicit reliance in the promise of their chief. His advices to the government at this time, when every eye in the country may be said to have been strained in watching the fate of this double forlorn hope, — those who went and those who were left, — have no word of anxiety or for effect. "*If the enemy oppose me, no matter in what force, I shall fight him.*"

The military character of Gen. Taylor was formed in that perhaps, best imaginable school for true military greatness; a school which more than any other teaches a reliance upon the satisfaction of having done one's duty as its chief reward. I allude to campaigns against the savage foe. It has been well said that it is not in Indian wars that heroes are celebrated, but it is in these that heroes are formed. All the adventitious aids and excitements incident to war in civilized lands, are absent. No "Halls of the Montezumas," no triumphal arches, no formal delivery of the keys of walled cities with the parade of a fête day, no heralding presses are ready to welcome the victorious army of the swamp, the everglades, the prairie, and the cane-break. The foe cunning in his stratagems, brave in the conflict, cruel in his victory resembles rather the wild brute denizen of the forest than any foe known to military history. In the polished and chivalrous conflicts of European armies, the officer, whether he be victor or vanquished, knows but little

change in personal condition and comforts. If conqueror, he is entitled to the palaces and luxuries of wealth and refinement; if captured, it is, perhaps, to share these with his rival. In Indian war, the conqueror marches back to his bivouac or his rude garrison in the wilderness. If beaten, he is marched away perhaps to tortures and massacre! Unsatisfactory to the soldier as Indian wars must be, the voice of experience is full and decisive, that the successful leader in these need dread no other form of war. Gen. Taylor pre-eminently understood the character of the savage. He conquered him by skill and valor in war, as he did by his justice, firmness, and truth, qualities which it requires no civilization to appreciate, in peace. He manifestly regarded with more satisfaction his acts in these fields, than in what the world regards with far higher applause. On one of the very few occasions when he alludes to himself, a reception at Erie, Pa., his apprehension that he might not express himself with that grateful sensibility he felt, led him to say as an apology for his want of eloquence, "*Forty years of my life were spent in the service of my country. Toils, privations, anxiety and care were the elements of my education. During that time, I served my beloved country with all my energies in obedience to the laws. That part of my life to which I look back with the greatest pleasure, is when I was protecting the innocent inhabitants of the frontier, the women and children, from the tomahawk and scalping knife of the savage.*"

Every account of the manner and deportment of Gen. Taylor on the field of battle, corresponds in representing him as a paragon of collected courage, of deter-

mined, unshaken, persevering resolution, such as have their basis in duty and reflection. He was no fire-eater who rushed to the onset in that fury of excitement which we read of in the battles of Greeks and Romans, where every man sought his adversary to overcome him by strength of single arm. He partook in no degree of that battle rage, of which poets and romancers sing, where a wild, reckless unconsciousness of self, almost like a partial insanity, prevails.

As respects the rank of General Taylor as a great military commander, little doubt can rest upon the estimate of posterity. His Indian battles, like all such tests of generalship, must necessarily remain unsung. His battles in Mexico are, it is true, but four in number, yet under the circumstances in which they were fought, and the vast odds against him, would fix, it is believed, in all minds competent to judge, his capacity as a soldier. A great surgeon, to draw another illustration from that part of the art auxiliary to war, need but watch a single capital operation, to appreciate to the last degree the character of the operator. The Duke of Wellington, that great master of the gloomy science, on carefully following the account of the battle of Buena Vista, section after section, burst forth in the exclamation, "General Taylor is a General indeed!"

A great trait of his being worthy to be called a soldier in the highest and most chivalrous signification of the name, is that merciful and humane spirit, which seemed a part of his nature. He never confounded the technical enemy with the sense of personal exasperation

and vindictiveness. When the foe was conquered, there was an end to all sentiments, except those of kindness and benevolence. When his readiness to extend equal means of relief to a wounded enemy as to his own troops, was rebuked by some Quartermaster's doubts, as to the legality of any such charge, he at once silenced the objection by assuming the indebtedness, of which he ordered a separate account to be kept. When the government, it is to be hoped and believed from an erroneous view of the public exigencies, expressed its dissatisfaction in tones almost like a reprimand, of the capitulation of Monterey, intimating that more had been given up than the extreme rights of a victor had rendered proper, he bears the rebuke in easy indifference. To the officer who bore him the despatches, in ignorance however of their contents, he coolly remarked, after looking them over in his tent, "*The President does not like our capitulation very well. I wish we could have the pleasure of his company in our camp a few weeks. Perhaps he would take a different view of the matter.*" To his official superiors he plainly avows the reasons why he spared an effusion of useless blood. "*The consideration of humanity,*" says he, "*was present to my mind during the conference which led to the convention.*" It is a glorious and blessed circumstance for all future wars, if Heaven designs further thus to punish us for our national sins, that his country was on his side, and applauded him no less for his mercy to an abject foe, and his humanity to all the victims of war, than for his prowess and valor. His noble sentiment, quietly spoken to his son-in-law on the

field of Buena Vista, when the fortune of the day was looking doubtful, and the officer suggested the possibility of a retreat being inevitable, "MY WOUNDED ARE BEHIND ME, AND I SHALL NEVER PASS THEM ALIVE!" is to remain one of the nation's watchwords to the end of time.

I am indebted to the friend already referred to, a medical officer of the service, for another incident illustrative of the generous and kindly spirit of the old warrior. In one of the earliest of the Mexican actions there was brought to the rear a young subaltern, who "was making his first communion" in the bloody sacrifice of battle. He was supposed to have been mortally wounded, for his face was shrunken, he was cold, pulseless, with a chilly perspiration bursting from every pore. On examination, no injury could be found. Aroused by stimulants, the medical officers were not slow to discover that the youthful soldier had sunk beneath that moment of quailing, which the traditions of the camp ascribe once in each life, to every warrior, and to which, it is said, the great Duke has not proved an exception. The fact was communicated as a matter of official duty to the General. He enjoined perfect silence, with expressions of his confidence that the faltering was but accidental and owing to nervous weakness, not to infirmity of soul, and that a future trial might tell a different tale. The earliest test was amidst the fire and carnage of the almost unparalleled day of Monterey. And here, foremost in the breach, reckless of personal peril, with an unblanched cheek and unquailing eye, the lately shrinking youth cheered on his men, performing prodigies of

valor worthy of any veteran, who had passed in long gone years, through the baptism of blood and fire! The tender and considerate generosity of his noble chief, had saved a brave man to his leader, his country, and far more, to himself!

The military character of General Taylor was not created by fortunate results in Mexico. He was well understood by those whose position and duty called for the exercise of discrimination long ere this. Mr. Webster, alluding to the time when as connected with the Executive Government, and the very perilous and embarrassing circumstances existing with the Indians on the frontier,—war indeed actually raging with the Florida tribes,—gives this tribute to his character: “I very well remember, that those who took counsel together officially on that occasion, and who were desirous of placing the military command in the safest hands, came to the conclusion that there was no man in the service, more fully uniting the qualities of great military ability and great personal prudence, than Zachary Taylor, and he was, of course, appointed to the command.”

But I can linger no longer on the bright page of his military history. His life comprehended but one civil office, and all its many and important events are crowded into the brief space of sixteen months. Those cognizant of the events of an American Presidential campaign, need not be told, that there is a long, trying, testing ordeal in advance, in which qualities of mind, principle, temper and patience are subjected to a severer analysis

and exposure, than the whole routine of an ordinary civil life could be expected to require. It is an *experimentum crucis*, and if the candidate comes unharmed through the thrice heated furnace, he may indeed feel that his good angel has been at his side comforting and protecting him. That Gen. Taylor passed amongst the heated ploughshares triumphantly and successfully, need not be said. He resorted to no disguises,—descended to no indirect courses,—succumbed to no unworthy influences,—was intimidated by no denunciations,—was entrapped by no snares. Ascending the Presidential chair, he early illustrated some of the advantages incident to the selection of a new and fresh statesman to this great office, as well as his purity and disinterestedness. To use his own earnest words, when the civic crown was urged upon him, he “*had no friends to reward, no enemies to punish, nothing to serve but his country.*” So little was he embarrassed by any entangling understandings, direct or implied, that it is an interesting fact that every gentleman called to share in the high responsibilities as one of his constitutional advisers, was as an individual, a stranger to his chief. He had selected his ministers solely from high public considerations and general reputation, and so wisely and prudently was this step accomplished, that no person or section of country could or did feel that a slight had been given, or the public interests set aside. The brief inaugural address, pronounced before the mighty multitude assembled to welcome their chosen head, was a document of that compact, vigorous, Saxon English style, which

characterized all the productions of his hand; a style which "the lover of pure English undefiled," may point to as a model.

The events which followed his induction, so far as the foreign relations of the country are concerned, have been numerous, weighty and peculiar, — of a character often scarcely to be aided in their disentanglement, by parallels and precedents. He dealt with all questions with a plain, direct singleness of purpose, which proved the easiest key to their solution. The most wily and astute in the strange and often ignoble art of diplomacy soon discovered, that they were dealing with a man alike unlikely to practice or to be practiced upon, — a man who "would ask nothing which was not right, would submit to nothing which was wrong."

I am not disposed to undervalue the talents and experience of his coadjutors in solving these new and embarrassing cases, but no remark can be more true than that under our system, every President must be his own prime minister. Upon him, his wisdom and his responsibility, must the ultimate decision, the selection of a course amidst perhaps conflicting opinions, devolve. In the singular difficulty thrust upon him by M. Poussin, the ambassador of the earliest imitation Republic of the French, the annals of diplomacy cannot furnish an example of absolute annihilation in the eyes of the world, so complete as befel this rash and adventurous legate. The prompt and effective interference to preserve our treaty obligations with Denmark from being infringed was a more serious but perhaps less irritating

duty. Gen. Taylor proved to the world that the nation's pledged faith in his hands, would be like a soldier's, — a gentleman's truth, inviolate and unspotted.

The preparations to welcome Hungary into the family of governments, free and independent, had she sustained herself in her new position, justifying a recognition under the great code of public jurisprudence, were admirably managed in their secrecy, their strict regard to justice, and their coincidence with the sensibilities of our Republic. But it was his prompt, manly, noble vindication of the rights, honor and nationality of the Republic, in the course pursued respecting the miserable, worthless, Spanish refugee, Rey, which I regard as most closely approaching to some of the examples of the best spirit of the best days of the Roman power. It was Rome's proudest boast that the exclamation, "*sum civis Romanus!*" — *I am a Roman citizen*, — from the poorest of her people, secured safety, protection and justice, in every region, however remote and barbarous, over which the flight of her victorious eagles had made her name known. It has, unfortunately, been the reproach of our system, that amidst its mighty extent of power and duties, its flag, however powerful nationally, has proved a shield scarce worth seeking, to the distressed and wronged of her citizens, in foreign lands. I have myself seen in the streets of Havana, our own abandoned seamen seeking the protection of the red-cross banner of St. George, — calling themselves subjects of that father-land, which identity of race and tongue rendered at once natural and easy, because the energies

of a Republic were too expanded, were too tardily and negligently and inefficiently brought into action, to give them assurance and relief under the stripes and stars. The world had begun to feel, that the machinery of an *imperium in imperio* was too unwieldy to be put in motion for a private wrong, or to secure individual protection. The concurrent acts and opinions of those seeking their fortunes on foreign shores, were, that the flag of the United States was worth least of any to its citizens.

The case which called for the President's statesmanship, his patriotism, and his spirit, was most fortunate for the development of his character and for a reform of a public neglect. The individual who was seized by foreign direction in one of our own ports, in the peace of the commonwealth and entitled to its protection, was no Uhjazy, no Garibaldi, no illustrious exile in the upturned cause of liberty — no Paez, "an old man broken by the storms of state," in whose protection and behalf a thousand swords would leap from their scabbards. He was a poor, contemptible, lying vagabond. His only claim to the glory of being named in connection with the great events in which he figured, was, that he was *a man* — although an alien — on American soil, and as such the central pivot, on which a great principle of national honor and existence hinged. When General Taylor's earliest demands for his restoration were believed to have been slighted, perhaps from the expectation that a government, so notoriously dilatory and ineffective as ours in such duties, would require that its further demands should be the subject of quires of diplomatic

correspondence, or weeks of Congressional debate, while the victim's bones perhaps were bleaching on the *garrote*, the Cuban viceroy was frightened from his propriety by a brief message, which it is needless to say, brought back the kidnapped man, with all the speed that the elements would permit.

I have before observed, that the President was incapable of making one sentiment of flourish, that he never uttered a sentence to be repeated as a catchword or to draw applause. I might be obliged to except his memorable direction to his Secretary on that occasion, such is its point, could the English language express his idea in words more simple and unpretending: "*Tell them,*" said he, "*that unless they bring him back, I'll send and fetch him.*" Spoken by a soldier who was known and feared wherever the Castilian tongue was spoken — whose very name whispered, was like that of the Cœur de Lion, a spell to hush the unquiet Saracen infants, — who had at his command, as Executive head, the army and navy of this Republic, it had a sublimity of meaning which might well startle the proud and indolent despot, who rules, with tyrant rod, the sole unforfeited possession of "fallen Iberia," in the world she discovered.

Did the hour permit, it would be a grateful theme to survey the character of those treaties and conventions, so many in number and so important in consequences, with which his short administration was marked. It would be a grateful duty to illustrate the prospective peace-preserving effects of that convention with Great Britain which secures the formation of a ship-canal, — to use his

own words, "*a highway dedicated to the common uses of mankind,*" which no vicissitudes of war can touch; with Mexico for essentially a similar purpose, with the Sandwich Islands, with Nicaragua, Peru, New Grenada, and I know not how many other countries.

With respect to his administration in its domestic aspect, we all know and feel, alas! too keenly, that the cares and anxieties of his position, almost from the hour of his inauguration, have taken hold of one great, overpowering, absorbing topic of domestic disquiet. While the difficulties with far distant nations have been settled, as it were with a stroke of the pen, and every cloud dissipated, by a plain adherence to the principles of justice and "the golden rule," here has been that frightful skeleton, with which every great national house, as well as every domestic habitation, may well be said to be haunted. I realize full well the difficulty on an occasion like the present, of more than barely alluding to that great question, on which the minds of our fellow-citizens are so honestly divided at the North. Party man as I am by education, by temperament, and by conviction, I should despise myself were I capable of taking advantage of a time like this, where the immediate supporters of our departed chief are indeed honored by the united condolence of all, irrespective of political divisions, who are capable of appreciating uncorrupted faith, stern integrity, and unquestioned patriotism, to utter one word which would sound like partisan pleading. There is, however, a common path on which, and a point to which, every North-

ern man, every son of New England, may proceed in perfect harmony. As far and no farther than our revered President could have accompanied us all, will the courtesies and proprieties of this occasion sanction our considering his views. Looking at the position of Gen. Taylor as a slaveholder, born, educated, resident from infancy in a community where the views in relation to servitude were more like those of our country or England a century since, than such as we now all believe to be sound and clear, — arrived probably as he was, at middle age, before he ever heard the justice and humanity of the system questioned or doubted by any members of the community, it was with unbounded satisfaction that his friends here early heard his declaration, that whatever was the will of the people, legitimately and constitutionally expressed, *that* it was his duty to sanction by his approval and carry into execution. He thus placed himself deliberately and with his eyes open, in a position which would have rendered it not only easy and consistent, but imperative for him to sign any bill to stay the extension of slavery, and to limit its existence within its constitutional bounds, which the people of the free States, vastly in the majority, should agree, by their own use of their superior strength, to claim. His principles of prospective action appear to have been matured, and, although no official occasion had arrived, when, without interference with the law-making prerogative, he could put forward his specific views, great reason exists to presume that they would have met the approval of the entire North. It seems

to me, that his message in answer to the Resolution calling upon him to explain the Executive action in relation to the formation of a State government in California, and his often repeated remarks in a conversation with a committee from the Western Reserve of Ohio, at Mercer, Pa., give us no questionable indication of his determinations.

The position of the President since the present Congress commenced its session, is one which has been well calculated to test his self-reliance, his magnanimity, and his faith in man. From an early period, it was obvious that the Executive, yet untried, with no overt acts certainly to answer for, no faults so manifested as to have been fairly adjudged fit to be met with opposition, was to want a majority in each of the two Houses. By one of the singular accidents in the working of our system, a man who was elected by a most overwhelming expression of the popular will, was placed in direct antagonism with the other servants of the people, chosen also by popular majorities. In this unnatural state of things, the President, unsupported as he has been by the co-operation of Congress, in fact with the opposition of a strong portion of the leading minds, has stood firm and unshaken, exhibiting neither impatience nor resentment. Amidst the doubts and darkness which have been hanging over the action of Congress, the people have gathered with renewed confidence and a strong sense of protection around their President. It was this undoubting trust in his firmness, integrity and wisdom, suddenly prostrated by his death, which sent

such a thrill of sensibility throughout the nation, as the melancholy tidings were borne on the wings of the lightning, from city to city, and State to State. Each member of society felt as if his own stay, prop and staff, had been struck from beneath him!

It must ever be one of the melancholy reflections connected with the brief career of our President, that he was not supported in Congress, as the people would have sustained him. He felt this no doubt deeply, as well as the attacks made upon him personally, or rather in his official identity, by some reckless and unprincipled adversaries. While his integrity of purpose, his directness of conduct and his self-reliance were unmoved, he had not been so long trained to the blows of savage and poisoned weapons of partisan assassination, as to be unconscious of them. The pathetic exclamation wrung from him in his last illness, tells us, alas! how deeply the injustice and wanton wrong had touched him. "*I should not be surprised,*" said he to his physician, "*if this sickness should terminate in my death. I did not expect to encounter what has beset me since my elevation to the Presidency. God knows that I have endeavored to fulfil what I conceived to be my honest duty. But I have been mistaken. My motives have been misconstrued, and my feelings grossly outraged.*" It is painful even to allude to this sad subject, but the great lesson we are to draw from this melancholy occasion would be left untaught, were it to be wholly passed over.

In summing up Gen. Taylor's character as a statesman, I cannot forbear to apply the oft-quoted verse of

the Roman poet, so true in its delineation, that its triteness is lost in its felicity :

“ Justum ac tenacem propositi virum,
 “ Non civium ardor prava jubentium,
 “ Non vultus instantis tyranni,
 “ Mente quatit solida.”——

“ The man in conscious virtue bold,
 “ Who dares his secret purpose hold,
 “ Unshaken hears the crowd's tumultuous cries,
 “ And the impetuous tyrant's angry brow defies.”

The theme upon which it remains to touch, the private character of our deceased President — his life as a citizen, a head of a family, a man, — is one which has no embarrassments. His eulogist may rush forward without circumspection, for the ground is solid and unbroken, where no concealed pitfalls, no half covered mosses, no treacherous places require heed and caution.

If insensibility to moral worth, to personal integrity, be one of the signs of a decaying state, Providence be thanked, the American people have lost none of that quick and tender appreciation, which a republic should possess, whose sole foundation is in the virtue and culture of the masses. That striking resemblance in certain great moral lineaments and features, which the people early thought they traced between Zachary Taylor and the First of the Presidents, does not certainly disappear with the additional element, which higher responsibilities and the last scene of life afford. It was strong in their personal virtues, their early trials and positions in life. Bred in frontier seclusion, each had that gentleness of disposition, that modesty of manner, that regard to each unit of life, which are deemed the happy

results of the highest advantages of education and refinement. Trained alike in the camp from early manhood, the vices of the camp left them untouched. Their habits of temperance were pre-eminent; and in accordance with that advancing civilization and progress which, we trust, may be always onward, the last President, for more than twenty years, gave the weight of his pledge, and of course of his example, to the cause of abstinence. Wherever duty threw him, there he took an active part in the formation of temperance societies, and the distribution of temperance literature. Like that great exemplar again, whose character had always been the beau ideal of his admiration, and in assisting to consecrate a monument to whose memory he performed his last public duty, his name was unknown in the annals of quarrels, brawls, and duels. In the management of his private affairs, he was just and prudent, yet liberal and hospitable. By avoiding the errors of extravagance and pecuniary neglect, he escaped the wounds to his personal independence, the mortifications and dangers of indebtedness. He never gave a note.

From his qualities as a man, Gen. Taylor was endeared to the masses to a degree of which we have no modern example. And yet not one act, one word of his life was that of the demagogue, — the popularity hunter. It was his mild, paternal, honest character, united with the idea of his modesty, moderation, firmness, valor, indomitableness, and self-sacrifice, which gave him the prodigious strength he had before the people. The great men and the great presses of the country followed, but they

never led, in that triumphant march which terminated only at the Capitol. It is truly remarkable, in view of the present state of national interests and feeling, how little local or sectional there was in his popularity. The leading figure on the stage at a time when the elements of sectionality were more prominent than at any other epoch of our national history, how little was he regarded in any other than a national point of view. The question whether he were a northern, a southern, or a western man, nearly paramount at his selection, disappeared almost wholly before the development of a character, which dissipated all apprehensions of partiality and narrow views. An officer of the army of the nation, he was trained as a citizen of all the States, and his expansive and magnanimous traits of Americanism had never been "cabined, cribbed, confined" by the narrow and illiberal prejudices of local and sectional origin. Placed at the head of the nation, the idea of *State* interests, or claims to preferences and advantages which lines of latitude and longitude could discriminate, never entered his mind, or for a moment swayed his judgment. A holder of slaves, he was the strongest friend of *free* California; a planter, and as such presumptively biased against the protection of northern industry, he was the avowed supporter of a labor-rewarding tariff. It was as an American that all thought of him, — as an American that all deplore him. He was indeed the President of the *United* States — of the whole people.

The true strength of his character appears to me to

have laid in its just and harmonious proportions ; nothing wanting, nothing in excess ; the entire subjection of the lower elements — self-esteem, ambition, self-aggrandisement, love of glory, of ease and impulse of temper, to the single guiding principle of duty and self-approval.

His traits of disposition, as the head of a family, as a husband and father, are too delicate to be more than alluded to. Enough is it to say, that in all these relations his character was consistent — just what we should expect it to be — just what his biographer, anxious to perpetuate his true glory, would have wished it to have been.

The last closing scene of his life was in beautiful keeping with its whole antecedents. Providence grants to but few men, especially those whose responsibilities have been the heaviest, the opportunity of bearing their own unbiassed testimony to the true character of their own lives. Happy it is for such, happy is it for us all, that the physical laws of our being, as a common experience, save us from a test of our own hearts and lives so tremendously severe ! To Zachary Taylor was granted the rare felicity of being able at that hour when disguises are useless, when the thin veil is torn aside which separates the real from the seeming, when the applause of acts, however great, is lost in “the still small voice” of intent, fearlessly to look at the past with steady and unquailing eye. He met the last great enemy, just as he had done all the earthly adversaries against whom he had been obliged to contend, and for the self same

reason in his calmness. “*I am not afraid to die; I have endeavored to do my duty.*”

When the great Athenian philosopher was asked by the Lydian king, who was the happiest among men, he replied, “Let no man be called happy, until he is dead.” The whole life of Zachary Taylor is complete,— the last page is turned — the last seal affixed. The curtain has dropped over the scene, and we can safely pronounce that his existence has been happy for himself, happy for his family, happy for his country, happy for mankind!

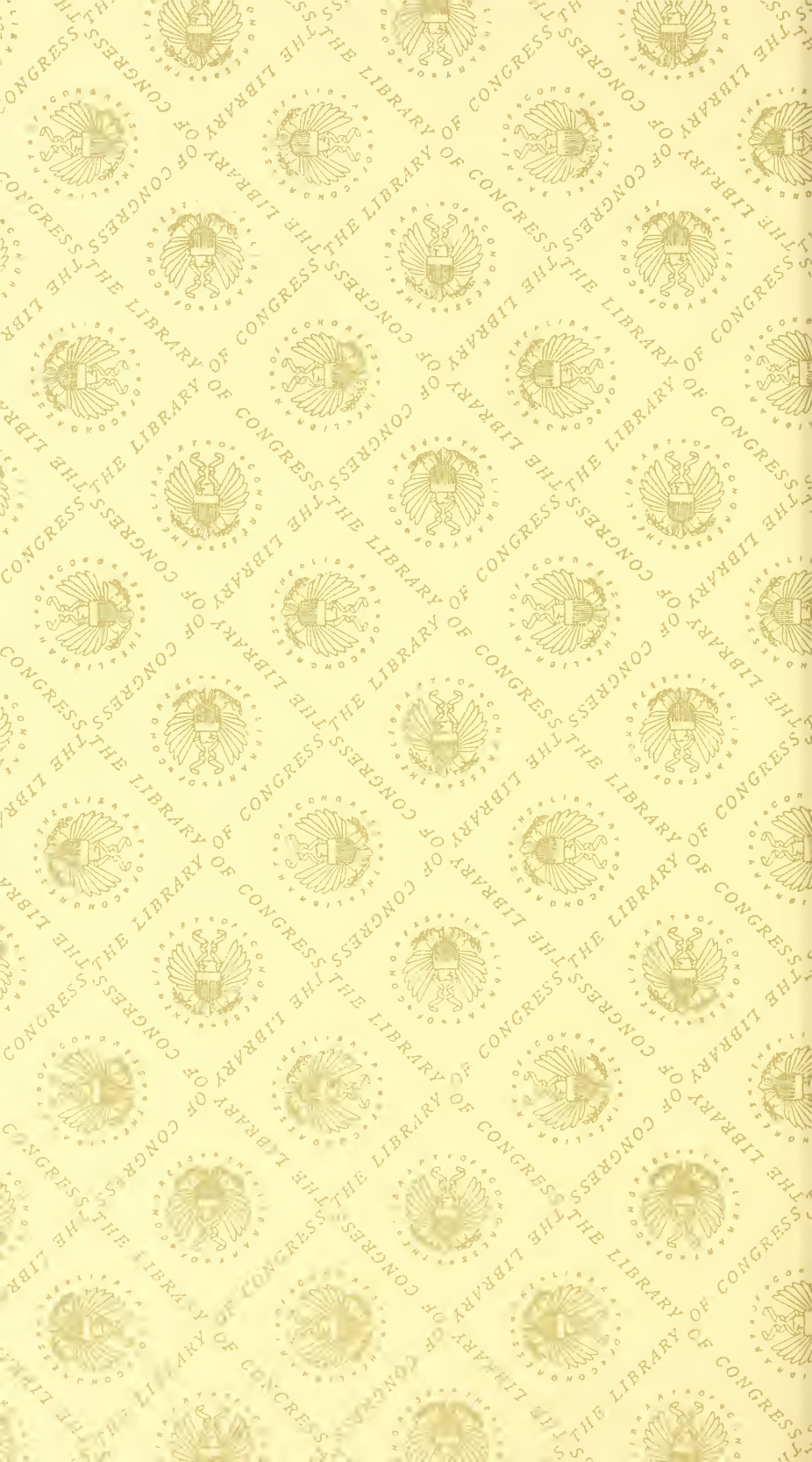
“Rest, wearied soldier, rest — thy work is done, —

“Thy last great battle fought — the victory won, —

“And where thy Country’s Genius vigil keeps,

“Around thine honored grave, a Nation weeps.”

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